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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE 4993
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE 3887
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0897

C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 000585

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FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: CY PGOV PREL

SUBJECT: LILLIKAS ON PAPADOP'S POLITICAL FUTURE (AND HIS OWN)

REF: A. NICOSIA 583

1B. NICOSIA 579

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald L. Schlicher for reason 1.5 (b).

11. (C) In a one-on-one conversation on the evening of July 11, Foreign Minister Giorgos Lillikas, who earlier that day had submitted his resignation to President Papadopoulos, offered the Ambassador comments on the collapse of the governing coalition and the upcoming presidential race. Lillikas noted that, like the other ministers who had submitted their resignations, he had been asked by Papadopoulos to keep doing his job until a replacement had been identified.

12. (C) Lillikas claimed that he and Papadopoulos had been surprised that AKEL actually went ahead with plans to put forth Christofias as a candidate. Objectively, said Lillikas, the administration had been a success -- he cited Cyprus's accession to the EU, acceptance into the Eurozone, strong economic growth rate, and "normalization" of AKEL in Cypriot political life as proof. Yes, admitted Lillikas, there had been differences over the Cyprus problem, but Christofias had never raised these differences "in a profound way" directly with the President or himself. Lillikas said that, in the last two months, he had had several conversations with Christofias aimed at keeping the coalition together; in one conversation, said Lillikas, he had offered to support Christofias in 2013 (instead of running himself). Lillikas added that he had warned Christofias that those within the party who were pushing him to run had neither Christofias's interest nor AKEL's in mind. Rather, continued Lillikas, those pushing for a Christofias candidacy knew that Christofias could not win, but were betting that a disastrous Christofias candidacy would force Christofias to step down from the leadership of the party, thus giving the "candidacy cheerleaders" the chance to grab the leadership themselves. Lillikas said that Christofias seemed to understand the downsides, but that, in the end, "ego" tilted Christofias in favor of running.

13. (C) Ambassador asked how President Papadopoulos, with his main coalition partner now fielding its own candidate, could get the percentages necessary to get into a second round next year. Lillikas replied that DIKO, the President's party, would give him around 16 percent. Papadopoulos would also retain about 80 percent of EDEK's voters, which would yield another 6 percent overall. EVROKO would add another 5 percent or so in the first round. Lillikas added that he expected that a significant percentage of DISY and AKEL voters, despite their parties, official support for the

other candidates, would, in the privacy of the voting booth, support Papadopoulos. He also predicted that, over the next long six months of campaigning, the current enthusiasm of the AKEL cadres for Christofias,s candidacy would fray, and that there would be several prominent public defections from AKEL to Papadopoulos. Lillikas,s ultimate prediction was that Papadopoulos would face Kasoulides in the second round, and defeat him soundly. If Christofias edged out Kasoulides for a slot in the second round, said Lillikas, Papadopoulos would beat him even more soundly. Lillikas opined that it was "impossible" that Papadopoulos would not make it into the second round.

¶4. (C) As for himself, Lillikas said that he would spend the next two weeks arranging the library in his (palatial) home, then go on holiday with his family until the end of August, "and then I will see what happens." Contrary to press speculation, Lillikas did not confirm that he would serve as Papadopoulos,s campaign spokesman. When asked about a role in the President,s campaign, he instead said, "My heart is with AKEL, but my head is with Papadopoulos."

¶5. (C) Comment: Lillikas has a history of choosing correctly which potential political mentor can further his personal interests, and hitching his wagon thereto. Despite his confident predictions, Lillikas,s note of hesitation about his future role in Papadopoulos,s campaign makes us think that Lillikas, whose political instincts are keen, has not truly decided which way the political wind is actually blowing. End comment.

SCHLICHER